

Coast Guard Repatriates 45 Dominican Migrants Following 3 At-Sea Interdictions



A group of migrants is waiting to be embarked aboard the Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez (WPC-1114) during one of three separate illegal voyages, of 49 migrants, in the Mona Passage this past weekend. The interdictions were a result of ongoing efforts in support of Operation Unified Resolve, Operation Caribbean Guard and the Caribbean Border Interagency Group (CBIG). U.S. Coast Guard

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez (WPC-1114) repatriated 45 of 49 Dominican migrants to a Dominican Republic Navy vessel Oct. 14 just off the Dominican Republic, following the interdiction of three separate illegal migrant voyages near Puerto Rico, the Coast Guard 7th District said in an Oct. 16 release.

Four other migrants remain in Puerto Rico to face possible federal prosecution on charges of attempting to illegally reenter the United States, which carries a potential maximum term of imprisonment of 20 years and a fine of up to \$250,000.

The interdictions were a result of ongoing efforts in support of Operation Unified Resolve, Operation Caribbean Guard and the Caribbean Border Interagency Group (CBIG).

“These are illegal and perilous ventures which greatly endanger the lives of migrants, who often embark grossly overloaded makeshift boats with little or no lifesaving equipment,” said Capt. Eric King, Commander of Coast Guard Sector San Juan. “In addition to enforcing U.S. immigrations laws, these interdictions help prevent the unnecessary loss of life.”

The first interdiction took place on the morning of Oct. 11 after a Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Air and Marine Operations DHC-8 marine patrol aircraft crew sighted a migrant boat near Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico. A Puerto Rico Police Joint Forces of Rapid Action marine unit arrived on scene and interdicted the makeshift vessel with six men aboard. The Coast Guard Cutter Diligence (WMEC-616) arrived on scene shortly thereafter and embarked the migrants.

The second interdiction took place Saturday morning after Ramey Sector Border Patrol agents detected an inbound migrant vessel near Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. Two responding Puerto Rico Police Joint Forces of Rapid Action marine units interdicted the makeshift vessel with 26 Dominican migrants aboard, 24 men and two women.

The third interdiction took place during the night of Oct. 12 after the crew of a Coast Guard HC-144 Ocean Sentry detected a 20-foot migrant vessel transiting the Mona Passage towards Puerto Rico. Cutter Heriberto Hernandez diverted and interdicted the makeshift vessel with 17 men aboard.

Once aboard a Coast Guard cutter, all migrants receive food, water, shelter and basic medical attention.

Cutter Heriberto Hernandez is a 154-foot fast-response cutter homeported in San Juan, Puerto Rico, while the cutter Diligence is a 210-foot medium-endurance cutter homeported in Wilmington, North Carolina.